

*do properly
in caps*

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Remarks of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) John T. McNaughton
at the Graduation Ceremonies, University of Minnesota, Duluth
Branch, June 10, 1965

I am very happy to be here to share this occasion with you today.

I would like to talk to you ~~today~~ on a subject that occupies a good deal of my time in the Government, the problems of combatting rural insurgency in an underdeveloped country, specifically South Vietnam. But as I was informing myself a bit about the nature of this audience and this area, I was struck by the exceedingly sharp contrast between the salient features of the citizens and the environment I am encountering today and those of the large areas of the world that are vulnerable to insurgency.

Among the first things I learned about northeast Minnesota was the dramatic upswing you are enjoying as the result of the technical innovation of taconite mining. I learned the way in which that development resulted from local foresight, cooperation, planning and initiative, including the contributions of a professor at the University of Minnesota and of another individual who is now providing you outstanding representation in Congress. I learned also of the role played in this upswing by the high level of education upon which Minnesota has always insisted, including in particular the contributions of the University of Minnesota.

Now, technical innovation, local initiative and cooperation, good local government and national representation, and widespread civic, technical and university training happen to be the sorts of activities and resources that are most notably lacking in the underdeveloped societies that I shall be describing. In fact, if I were to go on to describe the major characteristics of Minnesota social and political and economic

life, I could almost define the class of societies vulnerable to the Communist techniques of terrorism and insurgency -- ^{and} that includes a very large part of the population and territory of the world -- by the absence or the opposite of those characteristics.

That means, I am glad to say, that I do not expect to have to be dealing with the problem of Communist insurgency in northeast Minnesota any time soon. It may also mean that this audience will have to make a special effort of imagination to understand the sorts of conditions underlying the problems that concern us today in South Vietnam.

For some of my colleagues in the Government who deal with Vietnam problems, it would by now be a familiar experience to be confronting an academic audience on this subject. For them, just as for those of you, I am sure, who are graduating today, the end of this school year is an occasion they regard with very mixed feelings: for it marks the end of a season of "teach-ins" on our Vietnam policy.

I may be speaking prematurely; perhaps those of you who missed the National Teach-in in mid-May or the other all-night debates that preceded it are planning to fill the summer vacation with marches on Washington. But I suspect not. At least, I have the impression that most of the tired debaters who closed up the Washington teach-in in the early morning hours this May had reached a private judgment that their own need to discuss this particular subject all night had been largely satisfied.

For my own part, like certain others I was forced by a crisis in the Caribbean to be a drop-out from the Teach-in in Washington. With the school term ending, I would like to take this last opportunity to comment today on a few of the issues of our involvement in Vietnam that the earlier debates, as I have followed them, have shown to divide, in a rough way, proponents of the Government's policy from its critics.

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~~REMARKS OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (ISA)~~
~~JOHN T. McNAUGHTON, AT THE COMMENCEMENT CEREMONIES~~
~~DePAUW UNIVERSITY, GREENCASTLE, INDIANA, JUNE 6, 1965~~

It is a ~~very~~ nostalgic occasion ~~as well as an honor, for me to~~ be addressing this ~~audience, in this setting~~ ^{my wife and} It was ~~in the~~ early in World War II when I sat where you sit.

Those of you who are graduating today look on the end of this school year, as I did in 1942, with mixed feelings. And at least one reason for your mixed feelings is South Vietnam -- a problem area in which I happen to invest a good deal of my ^{time and} creative energy ~~and~~ (I have been there twice in the past four months).

Despite this, I am one of the few officials concerned with Vietnam who has not ~~been~~ ^{confronted} so far this spring ~~to~~ an academic audience on ~~the subject of Vietnam.~~ I was forced by a crisis in the Caribbean to be a "drop-out" from the Teach-in in Washington last month. Since today, at term's end, ^{salient} appears to be my last chance to redeem myself, I would like to comment ~~on~~ on two or three of the issues relating to ~~our involvement in Vietnam.~~

~~however,~~

^{teach-in}
To begin with, the phenomenon of the debates themselves deserves a word in retrospect. Many of you may have heard the parody ~~of~~ ^{of} the valedictory address by the captain of a nuclear submarine to his crew at the end of a six month's cruise. After a long and sentimental summary of their six months together under the seas, the captain pauses, takes a deep breath, and reflects: "Looking back on the mutiny . . ."

Well, "looking back on the Teach-ins . . ." it seems clear that

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the Government needs to find a way to communicate specifically with the academic community of scholars and serious students -- needs a channel for dialog in which one can take the time for detailed reasoning and examination of evidence and consideration of many issues, including reassessment of premises, values, probabilities, and so on.

Any such dialog would be extremely expensive in terms of high Government officials' ~~precious~~ time; but there are occasions when it would be justified.

What, in the end, would be accomplished?

Few, I am sure, would be converted from one set of firm views on policy to an equally strong belief in the opposing views. But the reactions encountered by one of my colleagues, who participated in several teach-in sessions and found himself stimulated and encouraged by them, are revealing. He found that a number of students from audiences that were, initially, almost uniformly hostile, came up to him after the long discussion to say: "Now, I'm confused." That, he thought, was ~~almost certainly~~ a long step in the direction of wisdom.

The other reaction that was reported to him was that he had "re-assured" many members of his audience about Government policy-making -- not by the substance of what he said, because many of them ended up disagreeing with that -- but by the very demonstration that Government officials were human beings, were using reason on these problems, were doing their level best to weigh a multitude of considerations including long-range consequences, and were listening to opposing views.

It seems too bad that such an impression would strike an American audience as in any way surprising or revealing or "reassuring." But perhaps it is necessary from time to time to go into greater detail and to deal with subtler nuances than most public occasions, with their multiple audiences, will allow about matters of difficulty, doubt and controversy within the Government. It is nearly always mistaken to imagine that the Government is either monolithic or totally self-assured in matters of the highest import. That observation certainly applies to the subject of Vietnam. Scarcely a question, a doubt, a concern has been raised, I believe, by any critic of the Administration in recent months that had not been raised for discussion at some point by some participant in the policy-making process within the Administration.

^{remarks}
In my ~~remarks~~ today, I propose to discuss several questions which go to the essence of the Government's policy with respect to Vietnam.

The first question is: Why are we in South Vietnam? You have heard the President's answer to this on many occasions, including his address at Johns Hopkins on April 7 and his message to Congress on May 4.

First, we are there to keep a promise. The promise of the United States has been made by three successive Presidents, clearly and in constant terms. It would be wrong to break that promise. Furthermore, the value of the national promise of the United States -- the reputation of America "from Berlin to Thailand" -- is at stake today in our undertaking behind the Government and people of South Vietnam.

Second, we are there to draw a stop-line to Asian Communist aggression. Since the end of the Second World War, the leaders of what is now North Vietnam have worked to impose a Communist state over all of Vietnam. Their further ambitions extend at least to the remaining parts of former French Indochina -- Laos and Cambodia. Their campaign was accelerated in 1960, about the time that Ho Chi Minh announced at the Third Congress of the North Vietnamese Communist Party the necessity for North Vietnam "to step up the . . . revolution in the South." And close behind the Hanoi regime, supporting it and spurring it on in pursuit of its goals, are the leaders of Communist China. A Free World withdrawal from the challenge in the jungles and mountains of Vietnam would merely transfer the battle line to other places. How much had to be swallowed up before World War II before we learned that simple lesson?

Third and finally,

~~we are~~ we are there on a mission to help South Vietnam -- indeed all of the countries in the area -- to make progress through orderly change. Progress is coming and must come in this changing world. Especially the young people quite properly have great aspirations. Old social structures will be immersed in turbulence. It is for us, with our enormous talents and physical resources, to help men everywhere to find the new course without sacrificing their freedom.

There you have our ends. They are fundamentally right; and our reputation as a world power turns on our achieving them.

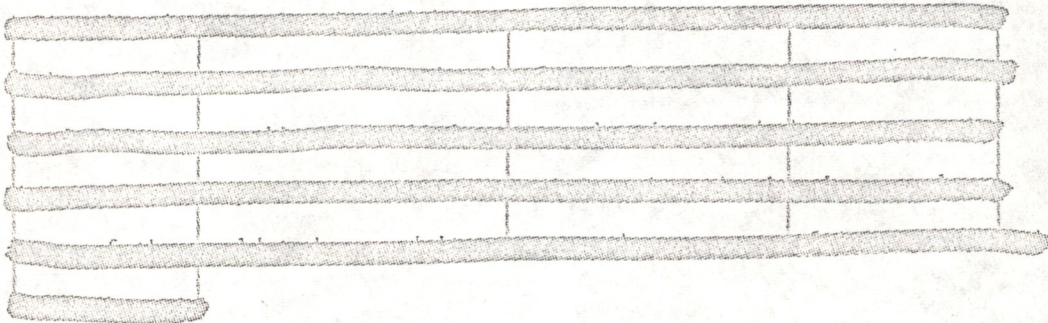
I have the feeling that many of those who differ with United States actions in Vietnam tend to under-rate the importance of our good reputation. Our reputation in this case, attached to a commitment that has evolved over the last decade, is being watched from the three perspectives of the South Vietnamese, of the Communist Bloc and especially Communist China, and of all those nations in the world who regard their security as dependent upon any form of U.S. guarantee. Here is one place where Communist China and the United States agree. Communist China sees the U.S. Government's commitment to the independence of South Vietnam as real, and she sees the U.S. Government's future influence in the Far East as turning on whether that commitment is proved to be worthless. We are being tested; that test is one of the largest stakes at issue.

What, then, of the means by which we are supporting our commitment? Two aspects of our programs, in particular, have raised questions: One is the U.S. and Vietnamese air strikes against selected military targets in North Vietnam; and the other is the deployment of some U.S. combat units

to South Vietnam, along with ~~the use of U. S. aircraft in direct combat support within South Vietnam.~~ ^{these steps} Why were ~~they~~ needed, and why at this time?

In South Vietnam, it is not another Korean war in which conventional military forces face each other along a battle line. Nor is it another Greece, where local Communist dissidents used neighboring Communist areas as sanctuary. We must understand that, while some of the people of South Vietnam are supporting the Viet Cong, the war is not a simple local rebellion. What is new and different is that, in Vietnam, the techniques of rebellion have been harnessed by a neighbor set on conquest. We are witnessing a method of concealed aggression that the Communists hope to use against vulnerable nations all over the world. To gauge its prospects of success -- to understand the vulnerabilities it exploits and the requirements for combatting it -- we must recognize the basic tactics of their approach. That approach aims, in the first instance, not at destroying armed forces or winning control of territory, but at destroying the roots of the existing government and exhausting the patience of the population.

The Viet Cong, in South Vietnam have never been able to rely upon ~~the~~ broad and deep nationalistic appeal. ~~The Communist techniques of rural insurgency~~ are designed to operate without such an appeal.



Fundamental to the survival and success of a government -- to its ability to collect taxes, to raise military manpower, to further economic programs, to develop a national spirit of progress -- is its ability to provide physical security for its officials and its citizens. Since the goal of insurgency is to destroy the authority and control of an existing government so as to substitute control by another, the basic step in the Communist technique is to demonstrate the government's inability to provide that physical security.

Beginning in remote, rural areas where the law-enforcement arm of the government is weakest and slowest, there are assassinations and kidnappings. By concentrating on local officials, the terrorists achieve three purposes at once: They dramatize the inability of the central government to protect its own officials, they destroy the government's presence and contact with the rural population in the area, and they demonstrate their own ruthlessness and total commitment -- a lesson that is not lost upon those from whom they demand taxes or labor or information or silence.

As the reputation of their deeds spreads, the guerrillas are able to use local agents relatively openly to collect funds for them, to propagandize, to recruit and to inform on officials, programs, opponents and the movement of government troops. Thus a "shadow" administrative, political

arm of the insurgency evolves, protected from betrayal and supported in its demands by the strongarm guerrillas.

The analogy to the "protection rackets" run by organized gangsters in big cities in the Twenties is very strong. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

This is the process that the Hanoi regime called into play in South Vietnam. I warn you, it is the process that may be beginning now in Thailand, where we have recently witnessed the assassinations of rural officials, simultaneously with bland statements in Peking that Thailand is ripe for insurgency.

In South Vietnam the assassinations began in earnest in mid-1957, and grew steadily through 1959. In 1960, Communist terrorists assassinated or kidnapped over 2000 local officials, and civilians. In 1964, 436 civic officials were murdered -- an average of 36 a month. In many case their wives and children were murdered with them. In the same year, 1131 civic officials were kidnapped; and aside from civic officials 1359 South Vietnamese civilians -- government sympathizers, informers, non-cooperators with the VC -- were assassinated and 8423 civilians were kidnapped or captured. In 1965, through May of this year, 756 civilians have been murdered,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] and
including 167 civic officials, 4446 civilians kidnapped, including 388 civic officials.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
In the cities, where the Viet Cong does not yet aspire to control,
their terrorism has a different, less discriminating character. There,
the grenade in the cafe, ^{or} the bomb in the street, ^{men,} killing women and
children randomly, advertises the presence of the VC and creates general
anxiety and unrest.

Statistics alone cannot convey the full meaning of this process
in what has become the way of life in ~~South~~ South Vietnam: ^{The} 11,000 civilians
murdered or kidnapped in 1964 ^{is} ~~is~~ equivalent in terms of U. S. population to
~~more~~ more than 100,000 Americans! Yet, remarkably, the will to resist the
Viet Cong persists, as is demonstrated by the continued willingness of South
Vietnamese to accept the village posts that make them targets for attack,
or to join the Popular Forces that man village defenses against the night
raids of the ~~Viet~~ Viet Cong.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]

How does one ~~combat the organized terror that I have~~ combat the organized terror that I have described? The rule is commonly heard that government forces need a superiority ratio of 10 or 15 to 1 to master the threat posed by guerrilla forces and terrorists. This partly reflects actual experience in countries where insurgencies have been successfully suppressed -- for example, Malaya. But it follows directly from the nature of the guerrilla challenge I have described to you.

Provided by North Vietnam with the critical margins of manpower, material and direction, the Viet Cong destroy and run, usually at night. They sabotage a railroad bridge, forcing the government to guard them all, they bomb a restaurant, causing all public places to be searched and protected; they assassinate a village chief, overloading the police and making good administrators hard to recruit. Furthermore,

[REDACTED]

to seek out and destroy an elusive enemy who has no responsibilities to defend territory or people and can choose to evade battle, they ^{government} must invest massive efforts in searching and encircling operations.

All of this is beyond the reach of a force that outnumbered its opponents only 4 to 1 or less, as the regular and paramilitary forces of South Vietnam do today. The main force

~~220,000~~ units of the Viet Cong -- their well-trained, well-equipped, full-time regulars in organized combat units -- are now estimated to number about 47,000 and their irregular forces 80-100,000; making total ~~220,000~~ guerrilla forces of about 140,000. ~~There are~~

574,000 South Vietnamese regular and paramilitary and police forces.

Yet as the Government of South Vietnam struggles to expand its forces, infiltration from North Vietnam

continues to swell the ranks and provide crucial leadership and technical support of the Viet Cong. Interrogations and documents have so far established the probable infiltration of over 39,000 men since 1959, ~~including~~ ~~25,000~~ ~~infiltrators~~ ~~from North Vietnam~~ ~~into South Vietnam~~ ~~between 1959 and 1964~~. We estimate that at least 10,000 infiltrators entered in 1964.

The importance of these infiltrators to the Viet Cong is far out of proportion to their numbers. Most of them have been seasoned guerrilla fighters from the campaign before 1954. They form the great majority of what the Communists call the "cadre": the organizational and unit leadership, all the way from central and regimental headquarters down to squad level. They extend the chain of discipline from Communist Party and military command headquarters in Hanoi down to the districts and hamlets of South Vietnam. They are the technical experts, the weapons specialists, the key communicators, the propagandists, the organizers.

The locally-recruited or coerced South Vietnamese in the Viet Cong form the majority of the 80-100,000 irregulars, the part-time guerrillas

In a typical Communist weapons cache of 101 weapons captured in April, 90% of the small arms and all of the heavier weapons were Communist Bloc weapons, nearly all Communist Chinese.

From this picture of the over-all challenge, two conclusions follow:
4 to 1

First, it is essential that the manpower balance within South Vietnam be further shifted in favor of the government forces. Second, it is essential that the critical flow of personnel, support and direction from North Vietnam be reduced.

Steps have been taken to redress the manpower imbalance. First, an increase of ~~more than~~ 100,000 South Vietnamese regular and paramilitary forces and police is underway. Second, ~~the deflection of manpower from the front lines~~ defections of the Viet Cong are being encouraged and are increasing. Third, South Vietnamese manpower is being "stretched" -- by lifting morale,

giving better planning, increased mobility, better communications and logistics support, and close air support. And finally, our deployment of U. S. combat units helps the manpower balance in several ways -- by releasing South Vietnamese units from defensive duties for offensive employment, by engaging directly in localized counterinsurgency operations and by providing reserve support to ~~South Vietnamese~~ units. We now have about 9000 Marines at Da Nang and 6000 at Chu Lai; and about 4000 Army airborne troops at Qui Nhon/Nha Trang, ~~who are being~~ joined by 900 Australian troops this coming week, and next week, ~~all of this is especially critical now -- now that the monsoon season~~ To reduce the critical flow of personnel, support and direction from North Vietnam, we have been forced to make attacks on North Vietnam by air.

has come, hampering our air support in South Vietnam and perhaps heralding large Viet Cong drives through the summer.

The purposes of the strikes are to slow down the aggression, to give heart to the suffering people of South Vietnam, and to convince the leaders of North Vietnam that the United States will see her commitment through -- that the United States is prepared for a long continued conflict.

You will recall that, in addition to the continuous terrorist assaults on things primarily Vietnamese, the United States had absorbed the November attack at Bien Hoa airfield, that we had absorbed the Christmas Eve bombing of the Brinks Hotel in Saigon, and that on February 7 the Viet Cong killed 8 and wounded 133 Americans at the Pleiku base in Northern South Vietnam.

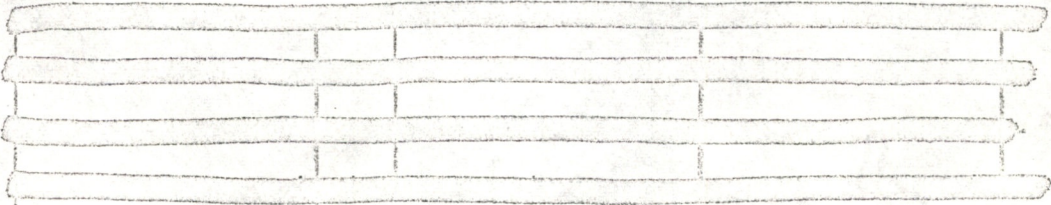
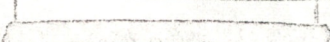
On that February 7, the U. S. and South Vietnamese strikes, against North Vietnamese barracks along the infiltration feeder routes, were carried out in less than 20 hours. Since then, there have been more than 100 strikes on North Vietnamese targets -- radar stations, ammunition and supply depots, airfields, barracks, roads, railroad lines, bridges, and so on. The targets have been chosen carefully to avoid civilian damage but to reduce the North Vietnamese capability to infiltrate men and materiel into South Vietnam.

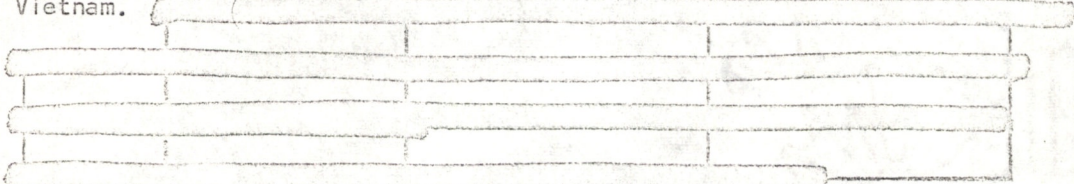
No one believes that the air strikes alone will be sufficient, but along with continued efforts in the South they are essential to a solution. They are essential to cut the flow of supplies. They are essential to convince Hanoi that their efforts in the South cannot succeed -- to prove to them for the first time that their acts of aggression do bring danger to them directly and do carry costs. The strikes give the North for the first time a reason to worry, and a reason to quit. By the same token, they give the Viet Cong in the South a reason to worry that the Northerners

will quit, a reason to doubt that the long hardships of the guerrilla life must eventually, with outside support, win out.

All of these effects should grow with time.

It is the support, infiltration and management from North Vietnam that has made necessary the current level of U. S. support to South Vietnam, and particularly the current involvement of U. S. combat forces -- for the Government of South Vietnam could ^{have handled} ~~handle~~ her indigenous problem alone. It is within the power of North Vietnam to make our combat involvements and current levels of support unnecessary. All she has to do is leave her neighbor alone.


that
 It is to help achieve ~~the~~ end; that the air strikes are now being carried out against the North; it is to help achieve ~~the~~ that end; that U. S. forces -- military support and combat -- are in South Vietnam.


The people of the United States and of the other nations of the Free World have a dream which is finer than that of the Communists. It is a dream of independence, of fast but orderly change, of as much individual freedom as possible as soon as possible. This is the real goal of all men. We in the Free World are not convinced -- and we do not expect to be convinced -- that it is necessary for the developing nations of the world,

in reaching this goal of freedom, to go through an oppressive intermediate stage of Communism.

We want a peaceful solution to the problem in South Vietnam. We want it very much. We seek no territory there. Nor do we wish to destroy North Vietnam or even, little as we like it, its regime. We want only an independent South Vietnam "securely guaranteed and able to shape its own ~~own~~ relationships to all others, free from outside interference, tied to no alliance, a military base for no other country. . . . We remain ready, with these purposes, for unconditional discussions" with any government.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the mood in which I began by quoting a remark made by the President, at his daughter's graduation exercise last Tuesday. He said, "It is not hard to act when you know you are right. I find it far more difficult to act when I just believe that I am right, but somehow knowing that I could be wrong."

You must understand, in this connection, three things that plague ^{your decision makes} us in Washington: First, that the facts upon which decisions must be based may be few or conflicting or complex or all three; Second, that ~~no decision is a decision~~ ^{no decision is a decision -- that} ~~is, to "not decide"~~ is, to "not decide" whether to change course is really a decision to continue the present course; and ~~third~~, that our job, responsible to you, is to do our best ~~to make the right decisions at the right time~~ to make the right decisions at the right time. This we are trying hard to do.

Thank you.